

dialogue

The Staff Newsletter of the Ministry of Community and Social Services

In this issue:

| | |
|--|---|
| Debunking the myths about employment equity in MCSS/They're not just clowning around | 2 |
| Simple solutions to pesky problems/Attention Deficit Disorders: acting on impulse | 3 |
| Technology Tips/People on the move/Training for employment staff | 4 |

She's the best

Lynn Myers gets a day off work for being the best in Belleville.

Lynn, a secretary with the Vocational Rehabilitation Office in the local Belleville office, was chosen the winner of a National Secretaries Day contest for the Quinte area.

Her name was submitted by the entire staff of the VRS office and Carol

Petter, supervisor at the VRS office, sent a letter of recommendation.

Carol and staff say that in addition to her excellent administrative skills, Lynn demonstrates consistently high levels of energy, commitment and initiative in her job. Lynn "enthusiastically accepts new challenges" and has served on several committees at local, area and provincial



Lynn Myers of Belleville's VRS office was winner of a National Secretaries Day contest, with prizes presented by Hazel Lloyd of Drake Office Overload.

levels. She co-ordinated the re-location of the VRS, Probation and Child Care units last summer in her usual efficient, well-organized manner. "Lynn's many positive attributes and accomplishments make her a key member of her unit and office teams and she is a most worthy recipient of this award," said her colleagues.

Carol says Lynn, who has been with the ministry for 12 years, is "exceptional."

The letter was persuasive — Lynn won a \$100 restaurant gift certificate, roses, a gift basket and a day off thanks to a temporary worker supplied by Drake Office Overload, the sponsors of the contest.

Only thing is, Lynn hasn't yet found the time for her day off!

Music for your mouth — literally



Music therapist Jean Caron takes notes as SRC residents listen to relaxing music that has helped reduce their bruxism problems.

music therapy to try to encourage them to relax. This kind of therapy is also known as "psycho-acoustics" — the effects of sound on the psyche.

Jean and Noreen decided on New Age music for the passive-listening sessions — specifically Steven Halpern's "Spectrum Suite." The six residents were taken to the music selection for 20 minutes at a time.

Four of the six residents demonstrated a decrease in bruxing behaviour during treatment. The response rate is encouraging, and Jean and Noreen want to expand the treatment to other residential areas of SRC.

The results of their research study has been presented at the Canadian Association for Music Therapy Conference, and is to be published in other professional journals.

If you want to try relaxing to music on a portable player at your next dental appointment, remember to choose soothing music, notes Noreen; heavy metal or "head-banger" music will have the opposite effect.

The power of music to calm and relax is being put to work for dental patients who reside at Southwestern Regional Centre. SRC's dentist, Dr. Manfred Friedman, recently approached music therapists Noreen Donnell and Jean Caron for help with residents with bruxism (better known as teeth-grinding).

Several residents had very severe bruxism problems, grinding their teeth so continually that there was an alarming degree of wear on their teeth as well as chewing and jaw problems, says Noreen. The problem can be so severe that other people can hear the grinding. The bruxism also frustrated residential staff because they could do little to prevent it, says Noreen.

Jean and Noreen decided to set up a research study with six residents who displayed the worst bruxism problems, using

Reforms and restructuring: A progress report on where we're headed

The ministry's direction in the coming year will focus on modified reform that includes expanding our current commitments for child care subsidies, and social assistance work in the area of jobLink. Deputy Minister Rosemary Proctor has told senior managers.

Reforms are being scaled back to more modest proportions, Rosemary and the assistant deputy ministers told about 60 senior staff who gathered on May 18th for a Senior Management Forum meeting. There simply is not enough money available to undertake all the reforms that had been planned, the deputy said.

Kevin Costante, ADM of Social Assistance and Employment Opportunities, confirmed that jobLink will be the focus of social assistance work. JobLink will help adult social assistance recipients prepare for and find work so they can support themselves; the ministry will work with the Ontario Training and Adjustment Board (OTAB) and jobs Ontario Training to further develop this initiative.

Projects in social assistance that are proceeding within the current legislative framework include:

- social assistance caseworker technology. This program is making impressive inroads and, Kevin noted, "will revolutionize how we deliver and manage social assistance and make for better policy." This project will result in a province-wide computer system that will improve the management of social assistance programs; it will enable caseworkers to better manage their caseloads and help reduce fraud.



Deputy Minister Rosemary Proctor addresses staff at a gathering of Senior Management Forum.

Jules Nacopoulos photo

- improvement to customer service, particularly appeals to the Social Assistance Review Board, through a bill of rights or similar statement.

- support of incentives toward employment, such as the Supports To Employment Program (STEP); and
- better accountability in the system. Funding is just not available for other planned aspects of reform, such as the Ontario Child Income Program and the Ontario Adult Benefit, Kevin said. The decision not to proceed with the adult benefit — a single monthly cheque that was to replace the benefits now delivered under General Welfare Assistance and Family Benefits — means attention will be turned to using current legislation to achieve our current goals, said Kevin. There are discussions underway with First Nations representatives regarding the

continued on page 2

Francophones and employment equity

Some questions and answers about employment-equity designation from the MCSS Employment Equity Office

Q What is the definition of a Francophone?

A Under the Ontario Public Service (OPS) Employment Equity program a Francophone is a person whose first language spoken at home and still understood is French.

Q Why are Francophones an employment equity-designated group?

A Francophones were identified as a disadvantaged group in 1986 when the provincial government did the "1 Count" survey to determine whether designated

groups, including Francophones, were facing barriers to employment and career advancement in the Ontario Public Service. Francophones were then included in the OPS employment equity program.

While they have made some gains in the OPS, Francophones are segregated in certain occupations. In proportion to their representation overall, they are under-represented in management and policy positions.

Francophone women in particular face additional barriers and are segregated in office administration positions.

While Francophones are a designated group within the Ontario Public Service, they are not a designated group under the

continued on page 2

Je parle français

They're not just clowning around

Two years ago, several staff at Huronia Regional Centre presented a seminar during Developmental Services Week to introduce the concept of therapeutic clowning to ministry staff.

Marg Casebow, Bernice Louis, Susan Munier and Judy Pink explained the purpose and proper character development of the therapeutic clown and the use of humour in therapy for people with developmental disabilities.

Since then, the clowns at HRC have grown into a Group of Seven and belong to a community-based, non-profit organization known as Class Act Clown Alley. The 10 members of the Alley serves the community of Orillia as well as HRC.

Besides "Sparky", "Sammy", "Suko" and "Missy", the new clowns are "Pud" (Wendy Grace), "Joy" (Cindy Geisel) and "Feemo" (Wendy Johnston).

Therapeutic clowning involves developing an original clown character, complete with costume, make-up, gait and facial expressions.

Here's how Wendy Johnston describes Feemo, her vintage male clown persona:

"Feemo uses his own weaknesses and oddities to make others laugh and feel better about themselves.

In his HRC debut, he showed that he can draw positive responses from clients who

normally don't respond," she says. "Feemo adheres to a code of ethics which includes poking fun at himself rather than at others.

"My goal is to use his character as a light-hearted, fun-loving approach to healing and education."

Wendy says she would like Feemo to use more sign language in his future clowning activities so he can reach people with hearing impairments.

For more information about therapeutic clowning, contact HRC's Pleasant Pastimes Drop-In Centre at 705-326-7361, ext. 2212, where you can reach Wendy, Bernice, Susan or Judy.

Clowning is heart work, not hard work, say HRC therapeutic clowns like "Feemo" (Wendy Johnston) seen here with Janice Abernethy.



Photo: Bernice Louis

Reforms and restructuring

continued from page 1

management and delivery of social assistance to First Nations people, he said.

Kevin also spoke about development of new cross-ministry initiatives such as automatic transfer of records and information from other systems. Transfers of information from ministries and agencies such as the Ministry of Transportation, the Registrar General and Workers' Compensation Board would help MCSS to update and verify records such as current addresses, births and deaths.

On the subject of child care, ADM of Children, Family and Community Services Lucille Roch said the goal is a better-managed system. There are not enough resources to meet the commitments for expansion of child care subsidies and at the same time accomplish the funding reform which was a key aspect of the plans.

However, the ministry will continue to meet the expansion that is now underway and some less costly parts of reform, such as consolidation of program budgeting.

Rosemary also spoke about other recent developments within the ministry with respect to the ministry's restructuring.

She said she is pleased with how much has been accomplished with restructuring, such as improved working relationships among divisions, since restructuring began a year ago. Although redeployment was stressful, more than 90 per cent of affected staff have been placed in jobs, she noted. The new Program Management Committee (PMC) is felt to be well-organized; the communication networks and recently-released policy development process (PDP) are just getting started, she said.

Rosemary also thanked staff for their work in getting the social assistance comprehensive review/casefile investigation up and going. She said she recognized the pace of change is causing much stress among employees, and that the changes of direction on reforms is hard on the staff who work directly on them.

Francophones and employment equity

continued from page 1

provincial Employment Equity Act which applies to the broader public and private sectors.

Q What about the French Language Services Act and employment equity?

A The French Language Services (FLS) Act, which came into effect in 1989, provides a government framework and obligation to offer French language services to the public in designated areas. It is not an act which guarantees employment equity for Francophones. The French language services-designated positions require proficiency in English and French. Any employee who meets this linguistic

requirement can apply for FLS-designated positions.

The act itself is often a barrier to Francophones in the OPS, particularly to their career mobility and advancement. Because of the act the general impression is that Francophones have "made it" in the OPS. In reality, Francophones continue to occupy lower-paying clerical jobs and have little access to decision-making positions.

If you would like further information regarding the French Language Services Act, contact Rejean Nadeau at FLS at 416-327-4886, or contact Nuzhat Jafri at the Employment Equity Office (416-327-4800) about employment equity questions.

Debunking the myths about employment equity in MCSS

One of the major activities of the MCSS Employment Systems Review (ESR) Task Force is to communicate to staff how the ESR relates to employment equity. The goal of the ministry ESR is to identify the barriers to an equitable workplace (barriers in our policies, practices, attitudes, assumptions), and develop recommendations to eliminate those barriers.

Over the past 11 months, the ESR Task Force has come to learn from MCSS staff that many myths exist related to employment equity. It is the intent of this article to challenge a few of these myths.

Myth #1: MCSS employment equity is a quota system.

No. While numerical goals are an important component of an employment equity program and necessary in order to measure progress, they are not quotas. Numerical goals are based on projected turnover rates, historical mobility patterns, external and internal availability and an analysis of the under-representation of the designated groups by specific occupations.

Achieving a goal depends on the effectiveness of the related objectives and action plan. A failure to reach a goal may call for an analysis of why the goal was not met (e.g. redeployment, lack of outreach);

a re-examination of the goal itself; a short-term specific staffing strategy (such as using targeted community outreach initiatives); or some re-working of the employment equity goals or the plan to achieve these goals.

Quotas, on the other hand, are imposed and evaluation consists of whether the quotas are met or not, regardless of the intervening issues.

Myth #2: Women are well-represented in this ministry.

Yes and No. Women with no other designation are well-represented overall within MCSS, but not among Management Compensation Plan (MCP) and Senior Management Group (SMG) positions.

While women with no other designation may appear to have made substantial progress towards equity, women with additional designations — namely, women who are also Aboriginal, Francophone,

persons with disabilities, and racial minorities — remain significantly under-represented in policy and management positions. Women with a second designation are concentrated in the clerical/secretarial category.



Employment Systems Review

No. In relation to their numbers within the ministry, non-designated group members continue to be promoted to and hold a sizeable number of management positions and positions with access to decision-making authority.

Myth #3: Reverse discrimination exists in MCSS.

As noted in Equity in Employment, the report of the Royal Commission led by Judge Rosalie Abella, "the end of exclusivity is not reverse discrimination; it is the beginning of equality." Employment equity removes discrimination and ensures that designated group members have equal opportunities in the workplace and receive their fair share of available jobs.

The Canadian Charter of Rights and

Freedoms and the Ontario Human Rights Code both provide for programs to improve the conditions of disadvantaged individuals or groups so that all members of society compete on a level playing field.

Myth #4: Unqualified people are hired under employment equity.

No. Employment equity does not compromise the merit principle. Labour force surveys and workforce analyses show that there are qualified people among the designated group members who, despite their qualifications, continue to face employment and promotional barriers. Systemic discrimination can become ingrained in the culture of an organization, making it difficult for qualified designated group members to take advantage of employment opportunities.

Employment equity reinforces the merit principle, ensuring that hirings are indeed based upon skills and abilities and that proportional representation is achieved over time.

Your comments, questions and suggestions are encouraged and may be directed to: Hunter Saggart, Project Manager, 56 Wellesley Street West, 17th Floor, Toronto, M7A 1E9. (Tel: 416-327-4933 or -4912; fax 327-0568; DEC Account ESR/Project).

Simple solutions to pesky problems

— part of a continuing series on better business practices in MCSS

By Julia Naczynski

Sometimes it's the annoying little problems that can really mess up your day.

The Windsor Area Office found simple solutions to two pesky problems that were plaguing just about everyone who used a phone or needed a file. You might be able to apply their solutions in your workplace, too.

David Fine Photography



Life's a lot easier for Windsor Area Office receptionist Louise Charette, now that there's an intercom system to contact staff.

THE TELEPHONE TAG GAME:

Soon after the Windsor AO installed its own voice mail telephone system, the reception staff found they had a problem.

It was very difficult to notify income maintenance staff members when a client had arrived in the main lobby, because often the staff person would be on the telephone or away from her desk, and couldn't be reached.

This new version of "telephone tag" meant that the receptionist would call the needed staff person and would then be channelled into the staffer's voice mail, which of course meant delay and keeping the client waiting, with the receptionist unable to even tell if the staffer was there or not. Tracking people down personally might mean a search over three floors, because income maintenance staff are located on the first, second and sixth floors of the 250 Windsor Avenue government building.

The solution was found in that old-fashioned device, the intercom. A simple intercom system, purchased from an office supply company, was hooked up at the reception desk and connected to the public address system.

Reception staff can now bypass the telephone and contact staff with a simple PA message ("Crene, please contact Reception") when a visitor arrives.

"What originally started out as a very frustrating experience for all staff has actually resulted in a savings of time and energy," says income maintenance supervisor Joan Mitchell. "Staff are notified promptly when clients arrive, which in turn has reduced the amount of time clients wait for service in the lobby."

THE MYSTERY OF THE MISSING FILE:

Anyone who works with a filing system that is also available to other people will sympathize with this problem. You go to central filing to borrow a master file, and it's out — and the last person known to have signed it out says she returned it already. How can you track it down?

Windsor Area Office has about 7,000 active client files, and keeps about another 2,000 inactive files for record-keeping purposes, says Joan Mitchell. The volume of files almost doubled from January to June alone, and there is only one full-time person assigned to the fileroom.

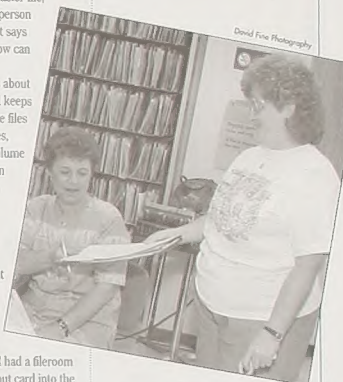
There was a sign-out system for the fileroom, but it wasn't working too well because the files weren't being logged IN upon return, says Joan Mitchell.

The old tracking method had a fileroom clerk re-inserting the sign-out card into the master file upon return. Often, though, the next person to borrow the file wouldn't add their name to the sign-out card. The would-be borrower would search out the last known borrower, who probably wouldn't have any proof that the file had been returned.

The solution was to tighten up log-out and log-in practices. The fileroom clerk now simply draws a line through the name of the last borrower on the sign-out card as soon as the file comes back, before

replacing the sign-out card.

The result is an easier time locating files because the field of search has been narrowed — and, the previous borrower is off the hook.



David Fine Photography

Fileroom staffer Linda Fortier has a file returned to her by overpayment recovery clerk Joan Sawyer. An improved sign-out system helps Linda keep track of files.

If you have a better business practice you'd like to see highlighted in Dialogue, let us know! Contact the Dialogue editor (see box on page 4), or Mary Simpson at the Better Business Practices Unit, 416-327-4567.

Attention Deficit Disorders: acting on impulse

By Julia Naczynski

Editor's note: This story concludes our coverage of the twice-yearly Adoption Resource Exchange sponsored by the ministry's Adoption Unit for adoption workers in Ontario.

"By the time I think about it, I've already done it!"

A cartoon showing a repentant youngster explaining to his principal why he behaves on impulse shows just why attention deficit disorders (ADD) are a concern to parents as well as those in the child welfare professions.

Adoption workers attending a workshop on ADD at the Adoption Resource Exchange on Apr. 26 agreed that many children they encounter have ADD. This neurological disorder — also called a child psychiatric disorder — is a result of a chemical problem in the brain and requires a medical diagnosis; it's not the result of bad parenting or the sign of a "bad" child, they learned.

Colleen Bacon, co-ordinator for the Toronto chapter of Children and Adults with Attention Deficit Disorders (CHADD) outlined the 14 characteristics of the ADD child. These include a child who: can't sit still or play quietly; is easily distracted;

can't wait his turn; blurts out the answers to questions; can't sustain attention in tasks or play situations; leaves tasks uncompleted; has difficulty following through on instructions; doesn't seem to listen; loses things; does things that are dangerous, such as setting fires.

The ADD child shows inappropriate degrees of inattention, impulsive behaviours and sometimes (but not always) hyperactivity. A child who shows at least eight of the 14 behaviours probably has ADD, and since the onset of the disorder usually begins before age seven, it's important to obtain the correct diagnosis and treatment as early as possible, said Colleen.

She noted that ADD children are usually average or above average in intelligence. She described the ADD child as being able to "see all the trees in the forest, but not the forest." It's easy to inadvertently over-stimulate an ADD child, she indicated.

Left unidentified and untreated, there is an increased risk to the child for impaired educational performance, low self-esteem, social problems, family difficulties and potential long-term effects. Half of all children diagnosed with ADD have been kept back a grade at school at least once, and 35 per cent never finish high school,

noted Colleen.

This disorder affects six to seven per cent of Canada's school population, which translates to one or two children per classroom. Boys suffer this disorder at four times the rate of girls, and it's believed there is a genetic link.

Colleen, who has a son with ADD, told the group that while "medication is not a panacea," it will help up to 85 per cent of children. But because of fear, it's often the

last choice of parents when it should often be the first, she said.

Colleen suggested a "multi-modal approach" that includes educational, psychological, behavioural, medical and parental intervention. Clear and consistent rules as well as routine also help in managing the ADD child. Patience and



Colleen Bacon of Children and Adults with Attention Deficit Disorders, Toronto chapter, describes the characteristics of the ADD child.

good use of positive reinforcement help to raise the self-esteem of the ADD child, she said.

The Toronto chapter of CHADD can be reached at 416-813-6858. The Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario (416-487-4106) is another resource.

Technology Tips

From Information Systems Branch

In this age of technology, personal computers (PCs) are used extensively, both in our workplaces and our homes. PCs have made data and the computing processes themselves very accessible, but this also increases the risk of exposure to computer viruses — a "glitch" that can be introduced into your computer that creates serious problems when you try to retrieve data.

Keep your computer virus-free through preventive care

FROM INFORMATION SYSTEMS BRANCH

The possibility of virus infections is further increased every time diskettes are used, computer networks are accessed, and also when computer bulletin boards (BBSs) and communications networks are used to download data. Most serious by far are diskettes brought from home which are known to cause as much as 43 per cent of virus infections. Other diskettes cause 18 per cent of virus infections, while 29 per cent come from unknown sources. Just like the common cold, computer viruses are a fact of life. There are many strains, some harmless and others far more damaging. How often you "catch" one is determined by how healthy you keep your computer.

To keep your computer healthy and free

of viruses it is recommended you run a scan for viruses on a regular basis with virus protection software that is now available. Every diskette you put in your machine should also be scanned to ensure it is virus-free.

MCSS has a ministry-wide licence for PCGuardian's F-Prot, a virus protection software which is updated quarterly. Because new viruses are continually being discovered, it is important to keep your software as up to date as possible. The current version of F-Prot is available from your local systems officer (SO), or you may call ISB Customer Support to obtain a copy (telephone number follows).

It is also a good practice to back up the data and programs on your computer

regularly so you can restore your computer should it ever become incapacitated. Data can be copied onto diskettes which you should then store in a safe place. Software programs can be reinstalled from the legal original diskettes that should also be backed up and stored safely. Your DOS manual will have directions on how to make backups, or your SO will be able to assist you.

Your SO will also be able to show you how F-Prot is installed in your office so you can run a virus scan on your PC and diskettes. If your SO is not available, you may call the ISB Office Automation Hotline at 416-730-6550 for further assistance.

People on the move

Doug Hayman has accepted a transfer to become the Hamilton Area Manager to replace newly-retired Don Cornish as of July 4. Doug has been the area manager for Thunder Bay since 1987. He came to MCSS in 1974 as a vocational rehabilitation counsellor in North Bay and has held a number of management positions, including social services administrator and children's services manager in London, and district manager in Thunder Bay.

The acting Hamilton Area Manager for the month of June is Terry McCarthy, who is Community Program Manager. Sue Braun, the district manager for Thunder Bay, will be acting Thunder Bay Area Manager until the position is filled by competition.

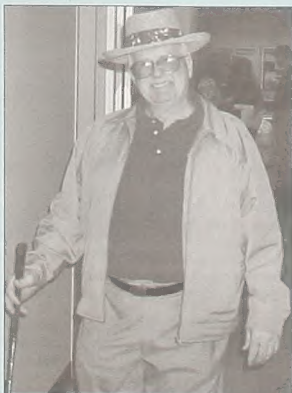
Cheryl Gorman has joined the Social Assistance and Employment Opportunities Division, where she will be taking on responsibility for the new Minister's Advisory Committee on Social Assistance which will replace for Council of Consumers. In July, Sylvia Moustacalis will move from her work with the Council of Consumers to the Caseworker Technology Project Team, reporting to Russ Stuart.

Margaret Weightman was the successful candidate in the competition for the position of Director of Human Resources. Margaret has been with the ministry since 1988 and has been the finance manager for Hamilton Area Office as well as the chief accountant with Financial and Administrative Services Branch. She has been acting in the director's position since last year.

On May 31st, Linda Duff (nee Linda Meers) passed

away. She had been the manager of finance and administration with the Strategic Directions Division, and a long-time employee of MCSS. She was 48. Linda is survived by her husband Allan and her children, Lisa and Tracey. Services were held in Oakville and in Kingston. The family requested memorial donations to the Canadian Cancer Society. After 21 years with VRS in the London Area Office, John Woodall retired on Apr. 30th. John came into the office on his long-awaited last day of work dressed for the golf links — windbreaker, Panama hat, golf club and a big smile. Besides golf, John plans to spend his new-found leisure time with new granddaughter Stephanie Ruth.

A happy retirement to Alan Clark, also of London. Alan retired in May after more than a quarter-century with the ministry. During his career, Alan had been a legal aid worker, field worker (now called income maintenance officer), supervisor of field workers and more recently was executive assistant to the regional manager of the Southwest Regional Office. He got his retirement off to a good start with a six-week trip to England.



John Woodall showed up for his last day with VRS in the London Area Office ready for leisurely days of retirement — complete with golf club, Panama hat and a big smile.

Training for employment staff

Staff whose work includes employment counselling will be interested in Employment Training ♦ Works.

This program is now available after three years of planning and is a joint effort by MCSS and the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA).

The 10-module training program is the outcome of the MCSS/OMSSA-sponsored Employment Training Project. Employment Training ♦ Works is designed for provincial (such as VRS), municipal and First Nations employment staff to enhance the skills and effectiveness of the participating counsellors. Best of all, there are no registration or materials fees, and the modules are offered at locations around the province.

The topics of the modules include: Assessment; Vocational Impact of Disabilities; Problem-solving and Communication; Challenging Racism; Marketing; Testing; Community Services; the VRS Program; Group Work; and Counselling.

Sessions vary from one to three days in length, and can be taken in any order or as

stand-alone training. Locations vary from Sudbury, Dryden, Hawkesbury and Orillia to Ottawa, Mississauga and Windsor and other cities. A total of 35 sessions have been planned from mid-May to mid-December and into 1995.

For information on course content and locations, call Chris Armstrong at the OMSSA office, 905-629-

3115, extension 227; to register, call Lynn Fuller at the same number, extension 228.



dialogue

Ontario Community and Social Services

Dialogue is published 10 times a year by the Communications and Marketing Branch of the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) to provide an information forum for all members of the ministry. The opinions expressed are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect ministry or government policy.

Michael Kurts
Director, Communications and Marketing Branch
Julia Naczynski
Editor
Debbie Adamson
Creative Services

Please send story ideas, articles, photographs and news items about people and events, with your telephone number, to:

The Editor, DIALOGUE
Communications & Marketing
7th floor, Hepburn Block
Queen's Park, Toronto, Ontario M7A 1E9
Tel: (416) 325-5168
Fax: (416) 325-5172
or e-mail the editor at NACZYNSKI.J

Next issue: July/August 1994
Submissions deadline: June 30